

EDITORIAL COMMENT



THE A, B, C OF STATE REGISTRATION

It would seem as if every nurse in the land must, after all that has been said and written, understand the reasons for State registration, and comprehend something of how such registration will affect the nurse already in practice, but we frequently hear from or talk with nurses who we realize have failed to grasp, even in the most elementary manner, the reasons for this great movement, and when we consider the apathy and indifference of the thousands of nurses in this country upon the subject, we are moved to again present the matter for the benefit of the uninformed.

The history of trained nursing, as we look back upon it, shows an almost phenomenal growth. When it commenced in the United States, and we will not take time to go back out of our own country, there were comparatively few hospitals, and they were situated in the great cities. The hospitals were large, and the opportunities for practical observation gave an intelligent woman great experience, even without much systematic instruction. A training-school was found to be an economic investment, and as hospitals multiplied in large cities and small, in towns and villages, training-schools have multiplied, every school being a law unto itself as to the amount of actual nursing education it shall give to its pupils in return for their services to the hospital.

In the beginning nurses were few, they were scattered, they were without organization, and, being without voice in the matter of the education of nurses, they did not concern themselves about it. Gradually, as the numbers have increased and societies have been organized, a professional feeling has developed. Nurses in small groups in many parts of the world have concerned themselves about the inequality of the nurse's education and her lack of legal status.

Those nurses who have been the superintendents of training-schools realized first and more fully the inequality of training in this multitude of schools, and the injustice of such inequality to a vast army of pupils. Training-schools are called educational institutions, but educational institutions of every other class must conform to a standard fixed in some way by the law of the State. Universities, high schools, grammar and private schools, must give to their pupils a certain minimum amount of instruction, the standard for which is fixed in some way by law. But the training-school is responsible to no higher authority as regards what it shall teach or how it shall teach. Now, by State registration every nurse after she shall have graduated from a training-school will be required to pass another examination fixed by the State before she will be allowed to practise nursing. By this means all of the training-schools in that State will be obliged to provide for their pupils the kind of instruction both theoretical and practical that will be necessary to enable them to pass the State examination.

By this means it is very plain that all of the training-schools will become more uniform, as they must adopt a certain minimum curriculum which will be compulsory for schools of the lower grade, but will not retard the development

of schools of the higher grade, so it is easily seen that by State registration the first great point gained will be a certain fixed standard of training to which all of the training-schools of the State must conform.

In other words, the law of the State will decide the very least that a nurse must know in order to be considered competent to care for the sick. Right here let us emphasize the point that a law never works backward; for instance, if a bill pass the Legislature requiring that all women practising nursing after January 1, 1904, shall pass an examination and be registered, such a law will not affect nurses who are already graduated and in practice; such women will only be required, before a fixed date, to register their diplomas without taking an examination.

This is exactly the manner in which the medical registration went into effect. Such an enactment, when secured, will be the first step towards placing trained nursing upon the basis of a recognized profession, and this object alone should be enough to rouse the interest and enthusiasm of every woman who has the right to call herself a nurse.

The direct advantages which will be felt by the passage of such a law will be that women who are practising nursing without a diploma will not have the right to call themselves trained nurses. The public will be protected from being imposed upon by such women as Jane Toppan and Miss Dingle, although the public will have the privilege of employing such women, knowing them to be untrained, if it so chooses.

This movement for State registration is a purely educational one; it is the first great concerted effort of nurses for the advancement, elevation, and protection of the nurses of the future; it practically brings nothing to the nurses who are leading the movement in the different States; they have nothing to gain personally in return for the time and hard labor which they are giving to the cause. Most of them are women who have given their best years to nursing work and who have learned by hard, practical experience where and how nursing methods are deficient and in what way improvements and protection can be obtained. But for the apathy of the great multitude of nurses engaged in private practice, the very nurses who are to be most greatly benefited by the successful issue of the registration movement, this whole question of State registration would be carried with but little difficulty.

Each and all of what are known as the learned professions regulate through coöperation with the Board of Education of the State, however that may be organized, the lines upon which the educational standard of its own profession shall be fixed; for instance, the medical societies of the different States send to the educational board the names of medical men from whom a Board of Examiners shall be selected by the State authorities, and this medical board, so appointed, make up the examination papers for the members of their own profession. Nurses in their State organization aspire to create a nursing standard in this same way; they claim the right to make the recommendations to the State board of both the nurses and physicians from whom the examining board shall be selected; in no other way can the foundation be laid for a professional status. Nurses cannot realize, even with all the advance that has been made in training-school methods and upon educational lines, that the trained nurse of to-day has no legal standing before the law. She does not belong to a profession, she is not classed even with the graduates of a technical school, and the woman who has taken up nursing without any training, or who has been discharged from a training-school for serious cause, has the same right to

call herself a trained nurse before the law as she who has given three years of hard work and hard study in any one of the training-schools of the highest grade, having graduated first in her class.

How long will nurses permit such conditions to exist when only a strong, concerted action is needed to improve the educational standard, to protect the public and nurses themselves against impostors, and to give trained nursing a place among the honorable professions?

When we read Mrs. Bedford-Fenwick's letter, sent to the Superintendents' Convention in Detroit, we cannot but be impressed with the difficulties under which the English nurses are working. We, in our greater freedom, have no social struggle against which we must struggle. We have only indifference and lack of unity among the nurses themselves standing between us and State registration.

THE NEW YORK STATE MEETING IN ROCHESTER

We are unable to hold the JOURNAL for the secretary's official report of the New York State meeting in this issue, but will give the bill and an outline of the official proceedings in the next number.

The regular quarterly meeting held in Rochester on October 21, in the assembly-room of the Nurses' Home of the Rochester City Hospital, was unquestionably the best, both in the work accomplished towards registration and in the entertainment provided by the Rochester nurses, of any that has yet been held. There was a carefully arranged programme prepared by the Executive Committee, which greatly facilitated the proceedings, both business and social.

Miss Julia E. Bailly, the first vice-president, presided in the absence of the president.

Miss Susan B. Anthony was the first speaker to be introduced, and although now in exceedingly frail health, Miss Anthony's interest in the discussions was so great that she remained in her seat on the platform through both the morning and afternoon sessions, an honor the memory of which those present will always cherish. It was easy for Miss Anthony to give an interesting account of the evolution of the nursing profession. She spoke of the time when she first took up work for women, when the trained nurse was unknown; she described the struggle of the first women physicians to get their degrees, and referred to the introduction of the trained nurse as coming at about this same period; she pointed out the influence which the modern nurse exerts in the family; she referred to the great power of women's organizations, and she emphasized the point that if the thirty thousand graduate nurses in this country had the right to vote they would obtain what they desire much more easily. She closed her address with an earnest appeal to the nurses to remember the power and the influence of their work, and to improve it to the utmost.

At the close of Miss Anthony's address Miss Nye, of Buffalo, moved that a rising vote of thanks be given Miss Anthony for her words of advice and encouragement, which was carried with great enthusiasm.

The morning hours were devoted to the regular routine business and the reports of the standing committees. Miss Keith, the superintendent of the City Hospital, entertained the members and visitors at luncheon between the sessions. The guests were served very gracefully by the staff of house physicians and the head nurses of the hospital.

Mrs. Arthur Robinson, president of the Board of Women Managers, assisted

by Mrs. H. G. Danforth, presided at the coffee-table, which stood in the Memorial Hall, the guests being distributed in groups throughout the assembly-rooms.

The Nurses' Home is well adapted for meetings of this kind, as, in addition to the large assembly-room, which seats over a hundred people, there are several small reception-rooms adjoining, besides the beautiful Memorial Hall, and the guests all enjoyed this opportunity for social intercourse, which permitted visitors and delegates from other parts of the State to become acquainted with the Rochester nurses and each other and made all realize as never before the benefits to be derived for our work by becoming better acquainted.

At the afternoon session Dr. William S. Ely, president of the Academy of Medicine of Rochester and a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners, was introduced and spoke most encouragingly in support of the registration movement. Dr. Ely was followed by the Reverend Father Hendricks, one of Rochester's most liberal philanthropists and a member of the Board of Regents of the University of New York. The addresses of both of these gentlemen will be given in the official report in the next number of the JOURNAL.

The business of the afternoon was the discussion of the bill presented by the Committee on Legislation. At the opening of this discussion the question of the title was introduced. There was great diversity of opinion, regular members and visitors expressing their views freely, but the final decision, when put to vote, was in favor of "Registered Nurse" by a majority vote of thirty-seven to two. The visiting nurses, more than a hundred in number, were then asked for their opinion, and a unanimous rising vote in favor of "Registered Nurse" was given.

The arguments for and against this title will be given in the next issue. Time only permits us to say that the gist of the argument in its favor was that to be registered one must have been graduated and must have been trained in a school receiving the endorsement of the Regents.

The Monroe County Nurses' Association, the Homœopathic Alumnae Society, and the Rochester City Hospital Alumnae Society united in entertaining the out-of-town members and guests at a dinner in the evening given at Teel's Banquet Hall.

The tables were set in the form of a hollow square, the color-scheme being yellow with clusters of great chrysanthemums placed at intervals upon the table. A most delicious dinner was served to sixty-two nurses, to which all did ample justice. After the dinner the nurses passed into the adjoining reception-rooms.

It would seem that our editorial suggestion for "more of the social" had borne fruit when the familiar notes of a "two-step" were heard from the piano, and a number of members joined in a lively dance.

The evening was too quickly over, but the members parted better friends for this hour of pleasure and good cheer.

Rochester nurses attended the sessions in large numbers, crowding the assembly-hall, but of officers, members, and delegates thirty-nine votes only were represented, a small number for so important an occasion, but with each meeting the cause gains staunch supporters and the society additional members. Perhaps a slow growth, if intelligent, is better than a more rapid development without a clear comprehension of the aims of the association.

NURSES FOR THE NAVY

SURGEON-GENERAL RIXEY, of the navy, in his annual report recommends that Congress provide for the establishment of a woman's corps of nurses for the navy

to consist of one superintendent nurse, eight head nurses, sixteen first-class and twenty-four second-class nurses, these numbers to be increased at the discretion of the secretary. If Surgeon-General Rixey's suggestion is favorably acted upon, and it undoubtedly will be as a matter of natural progress, we think some one of our nursing organizations should interest itself to recommend a suitable nurse for the position of superintendent. Why is this not a legitimate question for the American Federation of Nurses to take up?

ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS ENDORSE REGISTRATION OF NURSES

At the meeting of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, held at Champaign, Ill., on October 17, the delegates pledged themselves to work for State registration of nurses. The subject was presented by Mrs. Hutchinson, the president of the Illinois Graduate Nurses' Association, who stated that there were five bogus training-schools in Chicago that were teaching nursing by correspondence and granting diplomas at the end of six months. Her statement created something of a sensation among the ladies. The public can only be educated to the abuses in nursing education by having the facts presented in a reasonable, practical way by nurses themselves, and every opportunity to speak before women's organizations should be regarded as a duty by nurses.

The bill framed by the Illinois nurses we will give in a later issue.

IMPORTANT ACTION OF A HOSPITAL BOARD

We are informed that the Chicago Hahnemann Hospital trustees and faculty have dismissed from the staff those medical men who are members of the faculty or staff of one of the bogus schools for nurses which professes to teach nursing by mail. This is the first public expression of condemnation of this kind that we have heard of, and we congratulate the Hahnemann board upon its action.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

We call the attention of our readers to the change in the address of two members of the editorial staff, Miss Thornton and Miss Palmer, on the announcement page.





NURSE BUSSELL AT INDIAN HARBOR HOSPITAL SCULLING OFF TO THE STRATHCONA TO GET "APPLIANCES." HOSPITAL IN BACKGROUND,
MISSION-ROOM ATTACHED. THE WHITE ROAD TO IT IS OF RAISED WOOD OVER ROCKS AND IS A QUARTER MILE
LONG. FISHING-PLANTERS' PREMISES, FISH STORE, STAGE, ETC., ON WATER'S EDGE